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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: ALMATY NOTES, FEBRUARY 11 - 22, 2008

¶1. The "Almaty Notes" series is intended to maintain focus on developments in civil society, the media, and the opposition in Kazakhstan's "southern capital" following the move of the Embassy to Astana.

KNB Trying to Discredit Alga?

¶2. The National Security Committee (KNB) is launching a campaign to discredit the un-registered Alga party, the party claims. The KNB plans to focus on persuading ethnic Kazakhs to reject Alga on the basis that its leadership is dominated by ethnic Russians. Two weeks ago a KNB officer reportedly tried to recruit Sholpan Musina, an Alga staff member. The officer told Musina she should be an ethnic Kazakh patriot and cooperate with the KNB. (Alga Party newspaper, February 14)

Sergey Duvanov's Summer House Robbed

¶3. On February 21, well-known opposition journalist Sergey Duvanov reported that his summer house in the village of Kaynar, Almaty Oblast, had been robbed. Duvanov said that two watch dogs disappeared and the intruders took away some of his belongings, but claimed that the robbery appeared to be staged. A copy of the opposition newspaper Respublica was tacked up on the inside of the entrance door. Duvanov alleged that the incident was an attempt to intimidate him. He filed a police report requesting an investigation. (zonakz.net, February 21)

Almaty Mayor Derides Opposition, Abilov Responds In Turn

¶4. Almaty Mayor Imangali Tasmagambetov derided the Kazakhstani opposition during a meeting with Almaty residents on February 12. "One [oppositionist] opposes Almaty street crossings, but uses them. He opposes his wife, but eats the dinner she cooked. The other one is a temporary oppositionist who returns to the government when he is invited and goes back to the opposition when he is chided," Tasmagambetov said in response to a question by a Svoboda Slova correspondent about a construction project on Almaty's Republic Square. (www.almaty.kz, February 13)

¶5. "Imangali, how can you explain to your children where you got your luxurious house that cost several million U.S. dollars, when you are just a public servant?," opposition leader Bulat Abilov said in public remarks in response to Tasmagambetov. Abilov claimed that Tasmagambetov's house includes a stable and tennis court. He accused Tasmagambetov of making a fortune of "billions" by illegally selling municipal land through his son-in-law. Abilov contrasted Tasmagambetov's wealth with the disastrous situation in Almaty's underfunded schools and hospitals. (Svoboda Slova weekly, February

Almaty Migrants

¶6. Skilled labor is in great demand in Almaty, but the majority of migrants from rural areas work at local markets in unskilled positions, Almaty Mayor Tasmagambetov explained on February 12. According to Tasmagambetov, last year the city government allocated more than 2.2 billion tenge (\$18.3 million) to develop settlements for migrants. Nevertheless, more funds are needed to provide sufficient roads and electricity, water, and gas linkages, Tasmagambetov reported. "All our efforts will be half-measures if some of these problems are not solved by the national government," Tasmagambetov contended. (Interfax, February 12)

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